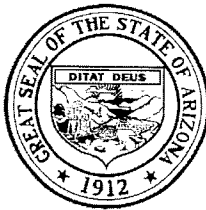


DOUGLAS A. DUCEY
- GOVERNOR -



VICTORIA WHITMORE
- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR -

ARIZONA STATE VETERINARY MEDICAL EXAMINING BOARD

1740 W. ADAMS STREET, STE. 4600, PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007
PHONE (602) 364-1-PET (1738) • FAX (602) 364-1039
VETBOARD.AZ.GOV

INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

TO: Arizona State Veterinary Medical Examining Board

FROM: AM Investigative Committee: Robert Kritsberg, DVM - Chair
Christina Tran, DVM
Carolyn Ratajack
Jarrod Butler, DVM
Steven Seiler

STAFF PRESENT: Tracy A. Riendeau, CVT – Investigations
Marc Harris, Assistant Attorney General

RE: Case: 21-35
Complainant(s): Tara Morgan
Respondent(s): Courtney Pike, DVM (License: 7134)

SUMMARY:

Complaint Received at Board Office: 10/5/20
Committee Discussion: 1/5/21
Board IIR: 2/17/20

APPLICABLE STATUTES AND RULES:

Laws as Amended August 2018
(Lime Green); Rules as Revised September
2013 (Yellow).

On January 14, 2020, "T [REDACTED]," 15-year-old female domestic short hair cat was presented to Respondent's associate, Dr. Louis, for evaluation and diagnostics. Blood work revealed the cat was hyperthyroid and methimazole 5mg was prescribed; Complainant was instructed to give ½ tablet twice a day orally.

On April 14, 2020, a refill was requested and approved by Dr. Louis.

On July 14, 2020, Dr. Louis resigned and left the premises.

On July 31, 2020, Complainant requested a refill of the methimazole which was approved by Dr. Pike.

On August 3 2020, Complainant stated she asked if she could increase the dose of methimazole as the cat was not doing well. The request was approved.

On August 13, 2020, the cat passed away. Complainant expressed concern that the medication was increased without blood work being performed prior.

Complainant was noticed and appeared telephonically.
Respondent was noticed and appeared telephonically.

The Committee reviewed medical records, testimony, and other documentation as described below:

- Complainant(s) narrative: *Tara Morgan*
- Respondent(s) narrative/medical record: *Courtney Pike, DVM*

PROPOSED 'FINDINGS of FACT':

1. On January 2, 2020, the cat was presented to Dr. Louis for evaluation. Complainant reported the cat was vomiting green bile after drinking, was losing weight and was barely eating. Upon exam, the cat had a weight = 5.7 pounds, a temperature = 100.6 degrees, a heart rate = 170bpm and a respiration rate = 30rpm. Dr. Louis noted the cat was QAR, had generalized muscle loss and was tachycardic – 204bpm. His rule-outs were hyperthyroidism, CKD, organ dysfunction, FeLV, FIP, FIV. Blood work was recommended; Complainant expressed financial constraints thus and estimate was sent to Pima Animal Care Center for financial assistance. Dr. Louis recommended starting the cat on a high caloric diet while waiting for approval of blood work. He advised Complainant of the possible risks if the cat had kidney disease.

2. On January 14, 2020, the cat was presented to Dr. Louis to have blood and urine collected and sent out for testing. The cat was examined – weight = 6.1 pounds, temperature = 101.4 degrees, pulse rate = 240bpm, respiration rate = 32rpm. Dr. Louis noted the cat was BAR, was thin and had decreased muscle mass. Blood and urine was collected.

3. Blood and urine abnormalities:

Blood:	WBC	20.8	3.5 – 16.0
	RBC	5.9	5.92 – 9.93
	HGB	9.1	9.3 – 15.9
	Neuts	16,432	2,500 – 8,500
	Monos	624	0 – 600
	T4	5.0	0.8 – 4.0

Urine: Cysto:	Protein	1+
	Occult Bld	3+
	RBC	11 – 20 0 – 3

4. On January 15, 2020, Dr. Louis called Complainant with the blood results. He explained the results were consistent with hyperthyroidism and recommended starting methimazole 2.5mg twice a day. He offered both oral and transdermal options for treatment. Dr. Louis stated that his generic recommendations for every patient that starts methimazole with normal kidney values at the beginning of treatment is that lab work should be rechecked in 3 – 6 months to evaluate both the kidney values and the T4 as treating hyperthyroidism can reveal other underlying issues and changing the dosage might be recommended. Two refills were approved and recommended having lab work performed earlier if the cat does not seem to do well.

5. Complainant elected to treat the cat with oral methimazole due to cost concerns.

Methimazole 5mg, 90 tablets; give ½ tablet every 12 hours was dispensed (90 days).

6. On April 14, 2020, Complainant called to request a refill of the medication. Dr. Louis approved the refill with the same instructions (90 days).

7. On April 20, 2020, Complainant picked up the medication.

8. On July 14, 2020, Dr. Louis stated that he got into a disagreement with management. Since his concerns were not addressed, he walked out of the premises and resigned from his position.

9. On July 16, 2020, Complainant called to report that the cat had been losing weight. The medication was working initially, however, she thought they were no longer working. Complainant picked up medication (?).

10. On July 31, 2020, Complainant called to request a refill of methimazole. Dr. Pike, Dr. Louis's former associate, approved the refill with the same instructions and recommended rechecking the T4.

11. On August 13, 2020, Complainant called to report that the cat had passed away the previous evening. She was upset that blood work was not performed prior to increasing the cat's medication. Complainant stated that she had called to ask if the cat's medication could be refilled to 1 tablet instead of ½ tablet and was told over the phone that she could.

12. On August 14, 2020, Hospital Manager, Ms. P [REDACTED] documented in the medical record that she reached out to an ex-employee, C [REDACTED] L [REDACTED] who recalled that around the month of April she spoke to Dr. Louis about increasing the dose of methimazole and Dr. Louis approved the dosage increase. However, she did not recall why it was not documented in the medical record.

13. Ms. P [REDACTED] also spoke with Dr. Pike who advised her that it is common practice to increase the dosage by an appropriate amount to see what the clinical response is to increase and blood work is recommended later on.

14. On August 24, 2020, Ms. P [REDACTED] sent an email to Complainant reflecting Dr. Pike's comments and dosage information from Plumb's Veterinary Drug Handbook.

15. According to Dr. Louis, he spoke to Complainant who told him that she called the premises after she picked up the medication on August 3, 2020 and was advised that she could increase the dose of methimazole to a full tablet twice a day instead of half. Ten days later, the cat passed away. When Complainant called the premises to report the death, she was told that Dr. Louis approved the dose adjustment in April or May. Complainant told Dr. Louis that she was not aware of any dose adjustment prior to August. Dr. Louis stated that he did not approve any dose adjustment and he quit his position at the premises on July 14, 2020.

16. Dr. Louis expressed concerns that the medical records dated January 15, 2020 was altered

by someone, adding the words "Full tab" and ".1".

17. According to Dr. Pike, she took over the care of Dr. Louis's patients once he resigned. She did approve the refill of methimazole for the cat and recommended rechecking blood work on July 31, 2020. She was unaware there was an increase in the dosage and was only made aware after the cat had died. Dr. Pike stated that she was informed by Ms. P[REDACTED] after she spoke to Complainant, that Dr. Louis had been communicating with Complainant and advised the increase, but neither Complainant nor Dr. Louis notified the premises of the change.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION:

There was no discussion by the Committee.

COMMITTEE'S PROPOSED CONCLUSIONS of LAW:

The Committee concluded that no violations of the *Veterinary Practice Act* occurred.

COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDED DISPOSITION:

Motion: It was moved and seconded the Board:

Dismiss this issue with no violation.

Vote: The motion was approved with a vote of 5 to 0.

The information contained in this report was obtained from the case file, which includes the complaint, the respondent's response, any consulting veterinarian or witness input, and any other sources used to gather information for the investigation.

TR

Tracy A. Riendeau, CVT
Investigative Division

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COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION FORM

If there is an issue with more than one veterinarian please file a separate Complaint Investigation Form for each veterinarian

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Received: Oct. 5, 2020 Case Number: 21-35

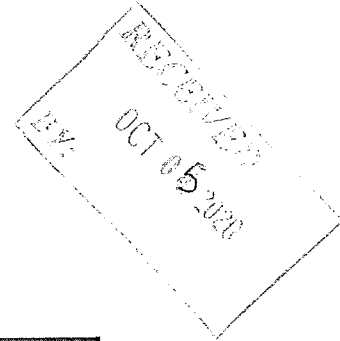
A. THIS COMPLAINT IS FILED AGAINST THE FOLLOWING:

Name of Veterinarian/CVT: Courtney Pike
Premise Name: Pet Doctor
Premise Address: 2661 W. 1st
City: Tucson State: AZ Zip Code: 85719
Telephone: _____

B. INFORMATION REGARDING THE INDIVIDUAL FILING COMPLAINT*:

Name: Tara Morgan
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
Home Telephone: _____ Cell Telephone: _____

*STATE LAW REQUIRES WE HAVE TO DISCLOSE YOUR NAME UNLESS WE CAN SHOW THAT DISCLOSURE WILL RESULT IN SUBSTANTIAL HARM TO YOU, SOMEONE ELSE OR THE PUBLIC PER A.R.S. § 41-1010. IF YOU HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SUBSTANTIAL HARM WILL RESULT IN DISCLOSURE OF YOUR NAME PLEASE PROVIDE COPIES OF RESTRAINING ORDERS OR OTHER DOCUMENTATION.



C. PATIENT INFORMATION (1):

Name: I ~~_____~~ Morgan
Breed/Species: Cat D. S.
Age: 15 Sex: F Color: Tabby

PATIENT INFORMATION (2):

Name: _____
Breed/Species: _____
Age: _____ Sex: _____ Color: _____

D. VETERINARIANS WHO HAVE PROVIDED CARE TO THIS PET FOR THIS ISSUE:

Please provide the name, address and phone number for each veterinarian.

Jan- July Dr. Louis, Sheriff

July- Dr. Pike- never saw or examined
Tazzie

E. WITNESS INFORMATION:

Please provide the name, address and phone number of each witness that has direct knowledge regarding this case.

ALL I know is that her meds were
increased w/out bloodwork first...

Attestation of Person Requesting Investigation

By signing this form, I declare that the information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. Further, I authorize the release of any and all medical records or information necessary to complete the investigation of this case.

Signature: Jana Morgan

Date: 9/25/2020

F. ALLEGATIONS and/or CONCERNS:

Please provide all information that you feel is relevant to the complaint. This portion must be either typewritten or clearly printed in ink.

T■■■■ was given Methimazole 5mg
Starting 1/16/2020 1/2 tab mon/night
As of Aug. 1st her Dr increased it to
5mg mon/night - T■■■■ had bloodwork
done just one time 1/2/2020 -

in July I called the vet and the Dr.
increased her meds without bloodwork.

T■■■■ passed away 8/12/2020

I am sure if bloodwork was done
the increase of meds would have been
different or a different medication
would have been given.

F. ALLEGATIONS and/or CONCERNS:

Please provide all information that you feel is relevant to the complaint. This portion must be either typewritten or clearly printed in ink.

Please acknowledge
I already have a
file pending-
this is a update

October 10th, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

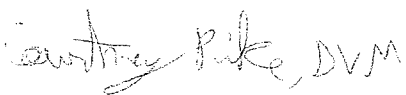
I will explain in this statement the sequence of events of my interactions with owner Tara Morgan pertaining to her cat T [REDACTED]. On July 31st, 2020, chart number 5929, belonging to Tara Morgan was placed in my refill request box located on my desk. Prior to this, T [REDACTED] had only been cared for by Dr. Sherif Louis since January of this year. He resigned abruptly from Pet Doctor on 1st Ave in Tucson on July 13th, 2020. As a result, I took over the care of all of his patients, including authorizing medication refills. At the time of the refill, I noticed a note stating at time of pick up of medication on July 16th that T [REDACTED] was losing weight and did not seem to be responding to the medication, but Tara Morgan had not stated any further issues upon further medication refills on July 31st. After reviewing the chart, I authorized refill of the medication as stated below.

T [REDACTED] refill was authorized for the following: Methimazole 5mg Sig: Give ½ tablet by mouth twice daily (Every 12 hours) until gone. I had also made a note that it was recommended for the owner to come in for bloodwork to recheck the T4 as it had been 6 months since the last bloodwork. This was relayed to the owner during a phone call stating the medication was ready to be picked up.

This was the only interaction I have had with T [REDACTED] and Tara Morgan and at that time I was unaware that there was an increase in the dosage. I was not made aware until after T [REDACTED] had died that this increase was made. I was informed by our hospital manager, R [REDACTED] P [REDACTED] after she had communicated with Tara Morgan that Dr. Sherif Louis had been communicating with the owner and advised the increase, but neither Tara Morgan or Dr. Sherif Louis notified our clinic of these changes.

Therefore, I do not find myself responsible for the claims that Tara Morgan has filed against me.

Respectfully,



Courtney Pike, DVM